

TESTIMONY BEFORE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Congressman Goodlatte and members of the House Committee on Agriculture:

My name is Emma French Randel. I am co-founder and president of Shenandoah Vineyards of Edinburg, VA, which was founded in 1976.

I have been asked to speak before this committee on behalf of the Virginia wineries and vineyards concerning the federal farm policy.

Shenandoah Vineyards was founded in 1976 and is the fourth oldest winery in Virginia and the first winery in the Shenandoah Valley. In those early days there, not much information was available on growing wine grapes or making wine in Virginia. There has been tremendous growth in the number of wineries and vineyards since the mid seventies. Currently there are 110 wineries and more are being started. This growth has benefited from the research and technology support of our Virginia enologist, Dr. Bruce Zoecklein, and our Virginia viticulturist, Dr. Tony Wolf.

It takes the investment of many years of dedication, hard work, a large investment of capital, and, I might say, passion, for a winery finally to become profitable. Many Virginia wineries have become profitable. The new Farm Bill should help the growth of present and future wineries, as well as other specialty crops, by helping growers improve quality and enhance marketability of agricultural products. It should help promote new efficient methods to increase production, and promote agriculture sustainability that adds value to the economy and keeps our farmland's rural character.

Specialty crops are a significant part of American agriculture with a farm gate value of about \$55 billion. Specialty crop producers represent more than half of all agricultural production. Thus it is very important that the next Farm Bill address the needs of specialty crops in a fair and balance manner.

I would like to see continued viticulture and enological research through block grants to the Virginia Department of Agriculture to support research in area and regional plant diseases and pest problems, and other competitiveness-enhancing programs. Research to develop virus-free rootstock is urgently needed for Virginia vineyards and well as those of other states. Soil studies of former tobacco land as ecologically safe for vineyard development would promote more vineyards here. We need better access to affordable technical and professional laboratory analyses, i.e., the founding of an East Coast viticulture and enological laboratory center.

Availability of labor is a big concern of winery and vineyard owners. Could this concern be addressed in some way in the new Farm Bill?

As wineries grow in size and number in Virginia, I envision the need for help in marketing our product here and even out of the country. A part of marketing that has been adversely affected here in Virginia is the loss of self-distribution of our wines. I am not sure how the Farm Bill would help

this problem, but there must be a way, because many of our wineries will find it much more difficult to grow and become successful. Grants for marketing possibly could help with this problem.

Funds to help sustain the wine industry in Virginia, and promote its growth, adds value to the economy, environment and quality of life in rural communities, i.e., Virginia's farmlands. With more vineyards, there will be fewer housing developments!

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today on this vital subject.

Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Information Required From Non-governmental Witnesses

House rules require non-governmental witnesses to provide their resume or biographical sketch prior to testifying. If you do not have a resume or biographical sketch available, please complete this form.

1. Name: EMMA FRENCH RANDEL
2. Business Address: 3659 S. OX RD.
EDINBURG VA 22824
3. Business Phone Number: 540.984.8699
4. Organization you represent: _____
5. Please list any occupational, employment, or work-related experience you have which add to your qualification to provide testimony before the Committee:
CO-FOUNDER & PRESIDENT OF SHENANDOAH
VINEYARDS
6. Please list any special training, education, or professional experience you have which add to your qualifications to provide testimony before the Committee:
PRESIDENT & MANAGER OF WINERY
7. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list the capacity in which you are representing that organization, including any offices or elected positions you hold:

PLEASE ATTACH THIS FORM OR YOUR BIOGRAPHY TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.

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